



From the Board Room

ACTIVITIES OF THE NC BOARD OF EDUCATION

DECEMBER 2017

The State Board of Education is comprised of the State Treasurer, the Lieutenant Governor and 11 citizens appointed by the Governor. This newsletter highlights the Board's activities on behalf of the 1.5 million public school students in our state and the more than 100,000 educators who provide services to children. You may view all State Board of Education member and advisor information [online](#). To access current and archived versions of From the Boardroom, visit the State Board of Education's [website](#).

Board Approves Grants for Digital Learning Initiative

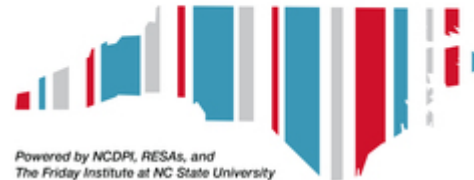
The State Board of Education last week approved \$1.38 million in awards under a new grant initiative aimed at supporting local school districts in the development and dissemination of innovative models for digital learning.

The grant funding is intended to advance the state's far-reaching efforts to scale up digital-age teaching and learning in the state's public schools. Under the initial round of grants approved by the board, 30 school districts and one charter school will develop locally designed approaches to better harness technology for instruction and student learning.

The Digital Learning Initiative Grants, most awarded at the maximum of \$50,000 each, will be used by districts this school year for planning or showcasing promising approaches to digital teaching and learning. Of the 31 grantees, 21 are designated for planning and 10 for showcase purposes. The grants were selected from a total of 61 applications.

The work of each grantee will focus on supporting the state's digital learning competencies for educators and other initiatives such as personalized learning, micro-credentialing, or digital literacies.

NORTH CAROLINA DIGITAL LEARNING INITIATIVE



Many of the approved grants focus on providing resources for professional development, seen as a critical foundation supporting the adoption of effective approaches to digital learning the state's schools.

Board Reviews Proposed Policy on Chronic Absenteeism

Board members this month continued their discussion about chronic absenteeism with a focus on the specific definition for adoption by the state and application within the schools.

In recommending a policy setting an absence rate of 10 percent – excused or unexcused, Amy Jablonski, director of Integrated Academic and Behavior Systems for DPI, told the board that such a threshold is consistent with that of other states and is also supported by research.

The first step for promoting consistent student school attendance and reducing student chronic absenteeism is collecting, analyzing and using accurate and consistent data,” Jablonski said. By doing so, schools are able to identify at-risk students and trends and to inform when and how to effectively and efficiently target school and community resources.

Chronic absence differs from both truancy and average daily attendance. Daily attendance is the percentage of students present in a school each day. Truancy measures unexcused absences only. Chronic absence refers to missing so much school, for any reason – excused, unexcused, suspension – that a student is at risk of falling behind.

A common definition of chronic absenteeism allows for meaningful comparison of chronic absenteeism rates within the state and across the country. Many researchers and the national group Attendance Works recommend using missing 10 percent or more of school as the threshold for chronic absence.

As proposed, the state’s policy defines chronic absenteeism this way:

"Student Chronic Absentee" is a student who is enrolled in a North Carolina public school for at least 10 school days at any time during the school year, and whose total number of absences is equal to or greater than 10 percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year;

This definition applies to all students enrolled in a school, including those who have not reached the compulsory attendance age, as well as those who have reached or exceeded the compulsory attendance age.

The board was told also that chronic absenteeism is an effective and actionable measure. It serves as an early warning indicate for principals and other school staff to identify students who are at risk of adverse outcomes due to absences from school and intervene to reduce or eliminate absences. In addition, aggregate reports at school and district level that measure the percentages of students chronically absent from school can help identify schools and districts that would benefit most from additional support and resources.

In his closing remarks, Board Chairman Bill Cobey called chronic absenteeism “a huge detriment to students chances in school.” The board is expected to vote on the policy next month.



AP Partnership Boosting Participation and Performance, Report Shows

A report to the legislature approved by the board last week shows that a partnership between the College Board and DPI is helping to increase the numbers of students taking Advanced Placement courses and exams and also helping raise performance.

Last school year, 21 school districts participated in the partnership as “targeted districts” with focused support and technical assistance. For this 2017-18 academic year, College Board and NCDPI looked at effective participation and success with the initial cohort of districts and began a new cohort of targeted districts.

Currently, 19 low-performing districts are participating in the partnership. With a new cohort, the AP partnership is gaining further statewide impact. The initiative also provides statewide support through professional development opportunities open to all public school districts across the state, through both face-to-face and online opportunities.

In addition, the General Assembly continues to appropriate funds to pay for all Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB) exams for public school and charter school students who were enrolled in the corresponding AP/IB courses; this began in 2014-15. Beginning this year, legislation included Cambridge International Exams (CIE) in this effort.

The state's most recent data from NCDPI and College Board show continued gains in areas of course enrollment, exam participation and exam performance. The College Board reported these results for the 21 targeted districts:

- The number of **students** taking AP exams in the targeted districts has increased 16.6 percent over the past three years, from 3,439 students in 2014 to 4,010 students in 2017.
- The number of **AP exams** taken by students in the targeted districts increased 19.1 percent over the past three years, from 5,409 exams in 2014 to 6,445 exams in 2017.
- The number of AP exams receiving a **score of 3, 4, or 5** taken by students in the targeted districts increased 18 percent over the past three years, from 1,730 exams in 2014 to 2,042 exams in 2017.

Four North Carolina districts were recognized by the State Board for being named to College Board's eighth Annual AP Honor Roll for increasing the number of students participating in AP while also increasing or maintaining the percentage of students earning AP Exam scores of 3 or higher in a three-year period. Those districts are:

- Clinton City Schools (second consecutive year)
- Montgomery County Schools
- Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools
- Yancey County Schools

Board Revokes Charter

Board members voted unanimously to revoke the charter of Heritage Collegiate Leadership Academy in

Bertie County after the school failed to satisfy a number of stipulations set by the Charter School Advisory Board earlier this year.

The vote followed an appeal-panel hearing by three members of the State Board the day before to discuss the nonrenewal decision for the school. Information was presented during the meeting both from staff of DPI and representatives from the charter school.

The school previously appeared before the Charter School Advisory Board at its October meeting. The advisory board voted by an overwhelming majority at that time to recommend that the State Board of Education immediately revoke the charter for the school. The State Board of Education (SBE) unanimously voted during its November 2017 meeting to accept the recommendation of the CSAB and voted to revoke the school's charter immediately. The school had appealed that decision.

Heritage opened in 2014 and was labeled as low performing by the state in 2015 and 2016. At its June meeting, the charter advisory board discussed problems with the school, including missing reporting deadlines, nearing a financial deficit and having a ratio of teachers to other personnel that was disproportionate compared to similar schools.

Board Approves Proposals for Five Cooperative Innovative High Schools

Proposals for five new cooperative innovative high schools won approval from the State Board, helping them advance to the NC Community College System or the UNC Board of Governors to the next step before final endorsement by the General Assembly, with or without supplemental state funding.



The schools recommended for approval:

- Marine Sciences & Technologies Early College High School (MaST) - Carteret County Public Schools with Carteret Community College
- Center for Industry, Technology and Innovation (CITI) - Nash Rocky Mount Public Schools with Nash Community College
- Innovation Early College High School - Pitt County Schools with East Carolina University
- Roanoke Rapids Early College High School - Roanoke Rapids Graded School District with Halifax Community College
- Southeast Area Technical High School (SEA-Tech) - New Hanover County Schools with Cape Fear Community College (Note: This high school is currently in operation and is applying to transition to a CIHS.)



**NC INNOVATIVE
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Two Groups Apply to Manage First School in Innovative School District

Innovative School District Superintendent Eric Hall told board members that two education organizations have applied to operate Southside Ashpole Elementary School in Robeson County as the first school in the new statewide district.

Meeting the Dec. 1 application deadline were Achievement for All Children, a Charlotte-based non-profit group, and the Romaine Group, a for-profit company that operates charter schools in Michigan and one in North Carolina.

Hall said that he's contracted with education consultants SchoolWorks to review the applications prior to returning to the board with a recommendation in January.

SBE Highlights: A [checklist](#) of Board actions is posted every month at the conclusion of the meeting. The State Board of Education's next meeting will be held Nov. 4-5 in the 7th Floor Board Room, Education Building, 301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, NC. Board materials will be available [online](#) by clicking on the Meetings tab.



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